SOME ASPECTS OF EST TRAINING AND TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY: A CONVERSATION

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This is an edited transcript of a discussion that took place February 1, 1977, in San Francisco. The occasion was an informal meeting of a few members of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology, several Journal *editors, and friends.*

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After opening remarks by Frances Vaughan Clark, president of the Association, the following discussion took place with occasional audience participation.

JF: One thing I'm not sure of is whether you and I agree on the role of the self, or the personality. That may be because I'm so interested in "devaluing" personality. I am more and more using the term "personal drama" rather than personality so that even "getting off one's position" to use an *est* term, isn't getting off enough since one is still attached to getting off one's position. This seems to be more a transpersonal value than perhaps you would accept.

the issue of personality

WE: No, I'd be wholly aligned with what you just said. I'll tell you where I think the difference might lie though, and that is perhaps in the path. What one does with personality is not avoid it, or ignore it, or suppress it, or shove it out of the way, but take responsibility for it, complete one's relationship with

one's personality, transcend it, and therefore include it as a content in the context which one *is* when one transcends one's personality. So, rather than to do away with the personality —and I'm not sure that transpersonal psychology would do away with personality—I want to make it clear that *est* would not do away with the personality. One would be responsible for it, cause it, instead of be the effect of it. Essentially one would complete one's personality as a way of being unattached to it.

personalities of enlightened beings

JF: I'll go very much for that. I think the difference is that it isn't "destroy" or "ignore", it's "devalue" the personality. What finally made it clear for me was when I met a couple of people who, in all general senses, are enlightened beings and go around doing what they do, and who still have personalities. And their personalities still had character flaws and irritations and neurotic disturbances and bad stuff from their mother, and I thought, "Oh, what a terrible disaster this is, to be enlightened and still have your personality." But then as I watch them operate they also still have their arms and their hair. In this sense, personality doesn't interfere with their function, but it also isn't the place from which they function. Their personality hangs around and when it's appropriate, it operates.

WE: Yes. That, by the way, is for me the most common popular flaw in the notion of what it is that we're talking about. That is, the notion that people who are enlightened don't have personalities and do have or don't have hair, as the case may be, depending upon which discipline it is, or don't have neuroses, etc. That's a kind of campaign of mine—to humanize our heroes. And the problem is that you get caught in a dilemma. If you humanize the hero, then you begin to make human qualities or personality all right, and that isn't the answer either. It really is just as you described it. I feel that we're totally aligned on that. I would like to find where there are differences, if there are some. You have a better insight into both camps than I do, Jim, so maybe you ought to point out where you think the differences might lie.

JF: Well, there is certainly a difference in method. I think you are more from a tradition that has people sit out in front of the temple for a couple days, miserable, cold, hungry, desperate, and if they still want to get in then you let them in. Much of the work I am interested in uses the method of going out and giving a little soup while they are out there. Milarepa (in *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*) has this wonderful dichotomy: he goes to work for Marpa who treats him like a total disaster, just beats him and kicks him and snarls at him and

makes him sick, and Marpa's wife every once in a while comes and gives him a little soup and a little love and says, "Don't worry, he doesn't hate you; this is what he calls teaching." And in some sense you're clearer on this being, the teacher, who, so to speak, beats people and makes them sore. Less visible is the wife, the compassionate side, the soft compassionate side. It's very clear that *est* is compassionate but it's the compassion of the "steel sword," and I'm not really comfortable with that approach. I notice that in the work I do when I'm trying to move people on, it's always from a much gentler place.

WE: Yes.

JF: You and I have talked about this in terms of the way one runs, say, a communications workshop. That is, is it necessary to force upsets, or force people's anxieties and irritations and disturbances to the surface to get the job done? I think this may be an area where we operate differently.

WE: Yes, and again I think that the difference is one of degree. For example, in the *est* training it's clear to me that if people don't have the experience of being loved in the training—I don't mean of being sympathized with, I really mean being loved—that they are deprived of something in the training. Somewhere along the line they have got to catch on to the fact that the person who is doing the training loves them and is doing the training out of the experience of loving them. By the same token, I agree with you totally that if there is a spectrum within which to operate, *est* would be at one end of it and you and the other people I know who identify themselves as transpersonal people would probably be at the other end of it. But what I am trying to point out is that I would feel uncomfortable characterizing *est* as devoid of that gentler kind of compassion. And I would feel uncomfortable as characterizing transpersonal psychology as being devoid of the harsher kind of compassion.

harsh and kind compassion

JF: I've certainly been a lot meaner since experiencing your training.

WE: There is a place where I think there's a real opportunity to explore something, although we may turn out to agree totally about this too. I want to start the conversation with what Gregory Bateson calls "natural history" and talk about what is commonly called experience, or what we ordinarily mean when we use the word "experience." If you say to someone "What are you experiencing right now?", and they attempt to describe what they are experiencing right now, what they discover is the best they can hope to do is describe what they

experienced a moment ago, and can never describe what they are experiencing right now. In addition to which, they can't even think about what they're experiencing right now, and they can't even perceive what they're experiencing right now, because when they stop to perceive it, it puts it back in time. I suggest that it's actually even worse than that. Not only can't they perceive what they're experiencing right now, but the best that they can do is to perceive what they experienced a moment ago. Actually, they're not able to perceive even what they experienced a moment ago. The best they can hope to do is to perceive the symbols used to record what was experienced a moment ago. Ultimately all perception is of symbols only and never of experience. And the symbols of experience are conceptual and kind of pictorial—perhaps "conceptual" is really the more technically accurate word.

experience and concepts

So one has experience and one has concepts of experience. And the purpose of the concepts of experience is to organize experience, otherwise one would have to grope around the walls of the room to find a hole to get through because of the lack of the concept "doors." In addition one would have to fall through the hole accidentally to get out of the room. So, concepts about experience are very valuable in that they allow one to survive and function in the world.

We could say that experience is process, is moment by moment by moment, and concepts are *about* experiences and organize it and are its organizing principles. To put it into more conversational language, I would call a concept an explanatory principle.

explanatory principles

Fundamentally, I think what goes wrong in people's lives is that the concepts begin to determine what is experienced. Then one has a conceptually determined experience which reinforces the concept, which then more fully determines the experience, which again reinforces the concept, and so on. Then people almost literally drop out of the experience of life and live in a mechanical state in which all, or most of, their experience is conceptually derived. So if you ask someone, "Do you love your wife?", and they say "Yes, but I don't get along with her very well," what they really mean is that they live with the concept that they love their wife, and very infrequently do they have the experience, if at all.

Then, if your concepts agree with society's values, you're called successful, and if your concepts don't agree with society's values, you're called criminal, revolutionary, insane, etc. And so you have only one of two things to do. First, the old notion

of what to do with deviant people was to give them the right concepts through some form of brainwashing, a very new term for a very old technique. It's also called enculturation, socialization, etc. Or secondly, you can give them therapy.

My notion about the newer therapies is that they intervene in the space *between* concept and experience, and break the grip of concept on experience so the person can begin to experience more directly. These techniques allow people to get in touch with their bodies, to get in touch with their sense of motion, their way of being, their emotions and their feelings, etc.

I'd like to suggest a third alternative. The third alternative is hard to describe because our language is designed to deal almost exclusively with concepts or explanatory principles and, rarely, with experiential quality. This third part of the game is simply not available through language for the most part. You can only point at it, you can never capture it. I am talking about what there isn't a word for, and there really isn't *any* way to talk about it because even the syntax doesn't work very well on this.

I call this third alternative the "generating principles" of life. So we have, first, the generating principles of life, second the process of life itself, and third the explanatory principles of life. When you're functioning with the generating principles you can't explain life. So, in Zen, it is said that those who know don't tell. In other words, what generates the process does not organize it or explain it. To say those who tell don't know means that which explains the process of life does not give rise to that process but merely organizes it.

the generating principles of life

As far as I can tell transpersonal psychology is very much about the generating principles, at least it approaches them through the paradigms of processes and of concepts. It still has some of its roots in therapy and psychology, which seem to be conceptual, and more of its roots in what I like to call the humanistic psychological approach, which I see as experiential. Transpersonal psychology seems to be centrally concerned with generating principles. Now just to give us a language to talk with, I call these generating principles "abstractions."

abstraction

JF: Your model is one which points toward abstraction. In Buddhism there is a name for this, it's called the "boat." One gets in the boat and crosses the great water with the boat. Only an idiot carries the boat onto the land on the other side. We call those "idiots" scholars and theologians. Some of them write for the *Journal*. They hang out here for a while and then decide

that since their stuff is useless on the other side they better go back—which is what I think I do because I love playing with concepts, kind of like juggling invisible baseballs.

different logics for concepts and abstractions

WE: The usual models exclude abstraction, which leaves only experience and concepts. Either you're a touchy-feely or you've got some intelligence, one or the other and never the twain shall meet. I think that some of the people in humanistic psychology kind of bought that, and my suggestion is that true intellect is a function of abstraction. There was a time when you couldn't really learn relativity theory, although you could know it. In other words you could abstract it, but you couldn't "concept" it. In Copernicus' time, one probably couldn't conceptualize the sun as the center of the solar system. You could create that notion, you could know it by making it so—not by concept-making, but by creating it. Physics fascinates me because at its edge, Einstein took physics out of the sensorium, out of concepts. Even if you use concepts that seem to transcend the sensorium, ultimately they're rooted back in the sensorium. For instance, infinity (∞) is a beautiful symbol. You can put it right in the center of your concepts, and manipulate it in mathematical models, and it's lovely. But the concept of infinity and the "sense" of infinity at the level of abstraction are two entirely different entities for me. So concepts have one logic and abstractions have another logic, and the two logics are entirely different, and they are based on entirely separate epistemological systems.

JF: I guess I'm seeing it from a place called "certainty." Certainty is right in the middle of abstraction. The degenerative form of certainty is called knowledge and then it goes down from there to the lowest form which would be rationalization or reasons. The concept of infinity, which I can't handle at all, is more useful to me as "eternity." In terms of the conceptual world, eternity is a long time, and in the abstraction area eternity is an experience, and I know that many of the people here have experienced it. If you haven't experienced it, you don't know what it's about, and when people say, "Well isn't eternity a long time?", you say, "That isn't it." And you say, "Well how about a *very* long time? How about three of them?"

So the thing that is fascinating to me is that all that I'm interested in, in some sense, is the little sign posts that people leave out. It's that old problem of pointing the way, and people come and suck on your finger. I'm really interested in how Transpersonal is trying to set up a little set of road maps that say not only, "There's the finger that points the way," but then there's another sign that says that "This is only a finger, do not suck." That's the place that I see transpersonal psychology doing a

service, talking in the conceptual world but continually pointing out where all the windows and doors are. In some sense I see transpersonal as a highly intellectualized activity, drawing from experience, taking it from eternity, and seeing what happens.

One of Ram Dass' many stories is about his teacher who went in and out of Nirvana. He'd . . . [inhales] . . . and he'd be in Nirvana and he'd come out and everything would be totally new and cool and fascinating, and he'd say something which was from a place of certainty and then he'd start to get stuck in the world. He'd think he was hungry, or an old Hindu, or whatever his thing was, and he'd take another breath and he'd go out again. And "out" was eternity and timelessness and selflessness, etc., and then he'd come back and everything was new again and he'd say something else. When you've been in the place of certainty and "come out" now and then, the story makes a lot of sense. If you haven't, it sounds like one of Ram Dass' crazy stories. Physiologically it looks like you can't be *in* it because that type of eternity isn't a long time, and you're in it *in* time so you come in and out. And the thing about the *est* training or sitting Zazen, or taking dope, or falling down the stairs, or a lot of other things is that you may break, just for a moment, into "eternity." Once you've been in it long enough or often enough, then at least you know that it was there.

signposts and change

There's a phrase in the training called "I got it," when really the phrase should be "I had it," because all you get is that you had it. As soon as you say you've got it you no longer have it, but you know you had it and therefore things can change. I think that's what we're all talking about, and that all of our work has been in that direction. We're coming up with different signposts and different ways, and the thing that I like about what you [W.E.] do is that the training has brought into possibility that moment of eternity, or certainty, or infinity, for people who seem not to have any other signposts.

WE: There's something I have to say, and I want to say something less than I mean as a way of sneaking up on what I mean. I want to say that if you don't keep reminding yourself that you're talking about that which one can't talk about, you can rapidly come to false conclusions. When you're manipulating symbols, you can make conclusions that are wholly consistent or logical or legitimate within a given system of symbols, but which have little or no legitimacy in the realm of experience and certainly none in the realm of abstraction. So at the level of concept, we manipulate symbols around and come up with new answers or new ways of looking at things, and that's really a lovely process, and people enjoy it and I enjoy it

too. I'm repeating a lot of what you said, by the way, to keep reminding us that a good idea isn't necessarily accurate about experiences or abstractions.

the process and the source of process

It seems to me that concept is never sufficient to tell the truth in the world of experience—that it's always deficient. It's essentially deficient in a quantum way rather than in a linear way. It's not just *less than* experience, it's *different* than experience. I would say to transpersonal psychology people, watch out for an equivalent deficiency with regard to experience. Being high, getting zonked, knowing, insight, whatever, is so far beyond concept and provides such valuable insights into concepts that it becomes very appealing, almost like bait to get caught on and stop at experience. When you get marvelous, incredible insights, and it feels terrific, and you have a sense of at-one-ness and a sense of spaciousness or spacelessness, then it's a good idea to watch out that you don't get trapped there because that isn't the source of the process, that is, *the* process, and the process does have a source. What you can learn by experience lies about the world of abstraction or the world of the source of the process.

Let me give you an analogy. Imagine that you and I are caterpillars and we're down here on the floor and we're talking about being up there in that plant and you say, "Listen, I'm going to turn you on to something. I want you to get that it's possible to go from down here on the floor to up there on that leaf without crawling over the space in between." Now I know that experientially that's crazy, that cannot be done, it's experientially impossible—I know because I've been up on plants like that a thousand times. So I say to you, "You're talking about some concept, about getting from here to there without covering—what would be for a caterpillar—the space in between." So I accuse you of conceptualizing, but a kind of mad conceptualizing since it doesn't fit with the consensus reality. If you think about it you'll see a caterpillar could simply not get the idea of flying, it's simply not available to a caterpillar.

I like this analogy because no matter whether he knows it or not, the caterpillar turns into a butterfly, which is my view of the way it's all going—so all this conversation may be irrelevant anyhow. But to the butterfly, the idea of flying is, of course, very natural and the butterfly encompasses within the flight the equivalent to the walk up the wall, or the space in between. So one of the things I would say to transpersonal people is that just as there is a distinction between concept and experience, so there is a distinction between experience and abstraction. The process of life has one system of logic, an epistemology, a

philosophy and an ontology, which is distinct and different from and not predictable by the epistemology, logic, etc., of experience. Now there's one last point I want to make but I think it's your turn.

JF: I just had an image of a surfer. If you've ever been surfing and you're riding a wave, particularly if you're body surfing so you're more into it, there's a feeling of total unity and oneness. Now what would happen to a surfer if you came up to him and said, "Excuse me, do you realize the cause of this?—it's the moon!" He might say, "I doubt it, because every way I have of knowing, it's very clear that it has nothing to do with the moon." To say it's the moon might imply living in a space, which, even if so, detracts from life. Now I'm not sure if that image fits what you just said.

WE: I think it does. What I think you're saying to me is "Look, what you do with experience is experience it, be conscious of it, be aware of it, be in it." Now are you telling me that you want me to be in and conscious of *and* aware of the source of my experience? Even that seems to detract from the experience. I agree. You've fallen beautifully into my trap.

JF: You may now make your last point.

abstraction and experiential values

WE: Yes. The reason I say you've fallen into the trap, which obviously you haven't, otherwise I wouldn't be telling you you did, is that you're applying experiential values to abstraction, and abstraction has no experiential value when viewed from abstraction. Abstraction only has an experiential value when viewed from experience, just as experience doesn't have much value when viewed from concept. So the validity of an abstraction is not predictable and even sounds ludicrous or strange from the structure of concept.

Let me give you another analogy. If you take a deck of cards and they are arranged in their logical sequence from ace through king, you may for example, want to know about the king. But if you are coming at the king from the ace, the way you get there is to go from ace to two to three to four to five to six to seven to eight, and every step gets you closer and closer to the king and finally you bang into the king and you say "Ah, I now know what the king is because I stood on the queen and reached the king." What I'm suggesting is that as fully as you've apprehended the king, apprehending the king the other way, from the top of the deck down, is entirely different.

Similarly, if you get experience backwards, which is the way in which I think humankind has it, then in fact, no matter how

smart you are, you are stupid, because the best you can do is explain it, but have no mastery of it. Or, the very best you can do is to force it, which is the other end of the spectrum from mastery of it. So, I say that if you don't start at the abstract end of the spectrum with the cause of things, if you're not coming out of the cause of things into your experience, then you're not fully experiential. And if you're not coming out of your experience into the concepts, then you're not even fully conceptual. I'm suggesting that there is a logical sequence here and that there is a logical flow or an appropriate flow or a natural flow.

JF: There are two ways to look at that flow. One is, detachment is of no value to someone who is detached, which is a valueless space, which is very awkward when you're striving for detachment because you realize that when you get it you won't care about it. The other side is, and I quote a Sufi source, "A donkey with a load of books is still an ass," and as you pointed out, "here we are," coming from the load of books side of the hassle. In the first research I ever did many years ago with psychedelics it was clear that something changed after the participants had a single high-dose psychedelic experience. We tried to get at what had changed, and it wasn't really physiological. It was something about personality structure, but mainly it was attitudes, beliefs, and values, which made huge shifts almost overnight. Subsequently, the research subjects spent a long time trying to figure out how to restructure their lives to include these new values.

changing attitudes, values and beliefs

Aud: Would you say that same kind of thing happens to the people who go through the *est* training?

WE: Yes, I would say that it's a secondary result rather than a primary result. The primary result for me is a shift not in attitude—that happens secondarily—but a shift in one's attitude about attitudes. So that rather than, "I used to have a shitty attitude and now I have a positive attitude," one hears, "I used to be stuck in my attitude whether it was shitty or positive, and I actually thought I had that attitude and that was my attitude. And now I can see that I have a whole spectrum of attitudes through which I move back and forth, none of which I am, and none of which is my attitude because I don't have an attitude—I am watching attitudes occur." So I think that when that happens, when you transcend attitude and you don't have that attachment to your attitude anymore, you know things are rotten, but so what, you know they are just rotten, that's all. It's not rotten that they are rotten, they are only rotten. Whereas yesterday it was terrible if they were rotten, now, you know they are just rotten and later on they will be terrific, and after

they are terrific they will be rotten again, and it kind of goes like that in no particular order necessarily. Anyway, I'm here amongst all the psychologists so I can't let you get away with that attitude stuff.

JF: From *an* attitude to beatitude.

Aud: We should probably look at what attitude really means. Mood is more what you're describing I think.

WE: Technically, attitude means a way of holding the world or a way of holding what you view. In other words, you have a point of view about the content of your perception or the content of your experiences.

Aud: It literally comes from how to hold yourself in the world, a body attitude.

"transpersonal" as an attitude

JF: The word "attitude" is a stance. Every time people try to define transpersonal education, or psychology, or whatever their discipline is, what I try to say is "No, Transpersonal isn't that, it's simply a stance or an attitude, a way of taking on whatever it is you're taking on," which is my way of trying to project us from being the kind of group that people would have to say, "They're stuck in their attitude, let's form something else."

WE: That's one of the things that I think is brilliant about transpersonal. It's really beyond point of view. The word itself almost means that.

Aud: I was interested in your caterpillars and your quick statement when you were talking about how the caterpillar is going to become a butterfly anyway and for that process to occur it's not necessary for him to know it. And then I thought, well then, why *est*, why transpersonal education? Certainly not because it's needed.

WE: Well, I have something to say about that. Life is essentially about "making it" and you get to define what "it" is. Maybe it is living in the right part of town, or maybe it is not living in the right part of town, depending upon which culture you're part of. But life is essentially about making it or, to put it in the terms we use in *est*, it's about surviving. Most of what we know about life is rules about surviving, and you can survive mightily or you can survive tinily, but it's about surviving. The three rules about surviving are "more, better, and different"; they are the answer to all problems of making it. If you've got any problems, the answer is one or a combination of more,

"making it" and values

better, or different. "Different," by the way, has a parenthesis after it; it's called "change." That's what I liked when you said, "We don't need it." How the hell do you talk about something you don't need? Obviously it's stupid to talk about something you don't need—we don't talk about things we don't need in this world. In a world which is composed of making it, the only question is, what do you need? The only question is, if you're not talking about how to make things better or make me better or something better, or if you're not talking about more (oh, and the new more is "less," what we have to have is more less) or better, or different, then you're talking drivel and nonsense. I tell people they don't need the training, that it won't make them any better. They won't be any more sexy or smart or better off than they were. They won't be any different and they won't have changed. They'll be exactly as they were when they walked into the training and they'll have gotten nothing out of it. People only value something because in the world of "making it" only *something* is of value, *nothing* is of no value, and it's the whole incredible stupidity of the Western concept of Nirvana. For my money most of the Buddhists have sold out and explained it so that it could be held in Western terms. This has totally ruined it. Nirvana seems to be so patently obvious that I can't get why the Buddhists have sold out and explained it. I mean *this* is Nirvana, obviously, it can't be otherwise. All of it *is* exactly the way it is and none of it isn't the way it isn't, and in the dictionary that's the description of "perfect."

JF: Earlier someone asked, what do we do it for if those folks who we are helping don't need it. Well, it's clear who needs it. We do. I mean why do I like to talk to six hundred people? It isn't that they need me, but if they weren't there I couldn't do that, so my feeling is that therapists, much more particularly, are filling their own needs by doing therapy on people.

Aud: Last week some friends and I were talking about the Association's forthcoming Fifth Annual Conference. We were discussing "source" and the process of creativity, and a friend quoted Einstein (from *Conversations with Einstein*): "... knowledge lay ready before the first discoverer appeared. He did not create it but merely drew back the veil that enveloped it so that ultimately we get back to intuition and its literal sense of becoming aware of things, an exact consideration of things, states, and relationships, and this intensive consideration full of wonderment has always been a privilege of a very few chosen men"—and I want to add that he said—"and women."

JF: The Islamic tradition holds that Mohammed was born before the earth was formed, but he didn't come into existence

until the Mohammed that we know was born out of a mother and a father . . . that it was always there.

WE: All the scientists I've interacted with take that view exclusively. I have the same problem with any approach which denies any creative knowledge and says that it's all there and you can only discover it. Approaches of this kind generate a problem; how come nobody learns the way the originator learns—that is, not by discovery but by creation. Originators lie to people about the way they learn because they did not learn it. They created it. They didn't discover it because the word "discovery" is a concept word, it's a conceptually valued word, it's the notion that what exists, exists locationally in time and place, and therefore you fall on it. Now the very same stuff can be talked about at the abstract end of the spectrum in which you can no longer talk about discovery in a way that the thing was there and you are going to flop on it. At the abstract end of the spectrum there is no evidence, and at the concept end of the spectrum there's only evidence. So up here at the abstraction you have certainty and down here at concept you have proof. Down here at concept you can prove anything and can't make anything happen, and up here at abstraction you can make anything happen and can't prove anything. Which goes back to, "those who know don't say, and those who say don't know."

To refer to what Jim said, Jim said you can only *have been* enlightened, and I agree with him on one level. My way of saying it is that what you do when you "get it" is to give it up, because if you hold on to it, all you hold onto is a concept, because that's all that's hold-on-to-able. Let me say it like this: what we attempt to do is get to our experience from our concepts, and maybe even get to the abstractions from the concepts, and I think that was what Jim was saying about the load of books.

transforming the flow of life

It is my notion that coming to experience from concepts is a condition called "becoming." If you are coming from concepts, you are becoming. It is possible to create a *transformation* in which the flow of life comes from abstraction and not from concept.

The thing that I said was happening when we were talking about caterpillars was transformation. I consider transformation inevitable—with you, without you, with me, without me, whether I like it or you like it. It's like women having more scope in the world—my opinion is irrelevant, it's going to happen. Now I can go kicking and screaming into that, or I can go along politely, or I might even support it, but it's going to happen. The true condition of transformation for me is a

condition in which the process produces transformation naturally, rather than by force. So "Boy, I made it. I was transformed once. I got my graduation certificate and no one can take it away from me because I have been transformed." Now I loved what Jim said, because if you do get a graduation certificate, you are going to hold on to it, and the only thing that saves you is to be able to give it up. Because it's only when you're not transformed that you can be transformed; if you're already transformed, you can't *be* transformed.

Aud: The way good teachers, teachers with a capital 'T', teach, is mostly to rely on experience, not on words. But every once in a while, when something happens, when somebody is ready to get kicked over the edge to do it, it seems to me that concepts do it, a word does it at the right time.

telling the truth, creating the truth

WE: I think that it's not possible to produce this state in words. I cannot tell you the truth; I can talk so that *you* create the truth for yourself. If I can talk so that you can create the truth for yourself, and it would come to "aha!"—and I'm not even there, you didn't even notice me. Now I didn't "get" it from you, but you were there, and I acknowledge you, in my terminology, as creating a space for me to create this certainty. So at one end of the spectrum is the world of words, and at the other end of the spectrum is also a world of words: one is what I think the Buddhists call "skillful means," the other is a lot of talk.

Aud: The thing that I notice about the skillful means theory is that, when a good teacher tells a story, your thought isn't so much, "Oh, I wish I had that experience" but, "Oh, I had that experience."

WE: Yes, that's beautiful.

Aud: So there's no separation between you and him.

JF: I remember very vividly a friend of ours who came out to the West. When he arrived I felt this enormous urge to teach him something. And I thought, "I wish I was a teacher in something, because he is so ready to be taught." And he told us about his cross-country trip, and everywhere he stopped, where he was going to hang out with anyone who either was a teacher or knew a teacher, the teacher would say, "I'll take you on." It was this ripeness, that you just knew he was ready to be plucked by somebody and it didn't matter who, because he was ready. And it was rare enough so that I can't think of another incidence.

Aud: Your example, Jim, of the teacher and the pupil is for me the gestalt of the object and the background. You can either choose to look at the subject, or you can choose to look at the background, or you can take it all in at once, which is, I think, what we're really talking about. In your story it seems to me that the pupil is the teacher, and so I guess I'm having trouble with the dynamic that is so linear.

JF: Well, let me add one other concept of Transpersonal which I got from (Frederick) Spiegelberg. He pointed out that Transpersonal can also be called *transpersona*, as through the mask. When you get back to who's looking through the mask you get beyond the subject-object, you're out into the gestalt.

credit, blame, and responsibility

Aud: I think that everyone here has had the experience of realizing that we already not only "know it" but are "doing it." And one of the things that interests me is why it's so hard to "take credit for it." What it really is, is taking responsibility for it, and we equate responsibility with credit. Now if you take the credit that means you've got to take the blame, and none of us want the blame. The way I see it, we don't get the pleasure of the credit, but we don't get the embarrassment and shame of the blame, and we don't take responsibility for it. My own experience is that when I have those moments when I take responsibility without the credit, then I don't worry about the blame and I really enjoy that very purely. The question is, why is it so hard to take responsibility?

WE: That's the end game move. For me, what it's really all about is, are you really going to be responsible for being enlightened? You know, we all know people who've given up all their worldly possessions, who've given up their reputation, who've given up their parents, their children, their spouses, who've given up parts of their body, people who'd give up anything to be enlightened, except the idea that they are not enlightened. They will not give up not being enlightened, it's too painful, it's too terrible to give that up.

Aud: And anyway it was yesterday.

Aud: Could you elaborate on that fear of being enlightened?

WE: It was just said: To be enlightened is the ultimate statement of responsibility. I mean, you no longer can lay the onus anyplace.

Aud: It's termed, "No praise or blame."

WE: Yes, that's really very good. You know, once you have a real experience of responsibility there really isn't any credit involved. I mean you can't take credit for things being the way they are because they always are the way they are. They are never any other way than the way they are, and you can be responsible for it. What people are afraid of is this kind of blame—they are actually even afraid of the credit. You know, as stupid and as small as I've been, I certainly can't take credit for anything. I might even be able to bear the blame of it, but I sure as hell can't have any of the credit. And probably the single most misunderstood explanation that comes out of people who have been through the *est* training is this business about responsibility. People cannot get that there is something beyond blame or fault, credit or praise. I think what frightens people about ultimately being enlightened is that it's an ultimately responsible position.

an ultimately responsible position

People who come out of the training do the same stupid things they did before the training. The point is that they give them up after a while. And then they do the stupid things that are next underneath the stupid things they've given up, and then they give those up after a while. So, when you got it you do stupid things, and when you don't got it you do stupid things, so what's the difference? The difference is that there's a sense of satisfaction about life or a sense of completeness about life when you're completing counter-productive patterns, a sense which is missing when you're simply reinforcing or dramatizing or acting out counter-productive patterns. So the real purpose of *est* is not to make people better. That's really difficult for people to understand. People come out of the training absolutely unchanged if the training has really worked. Now there is some little side stuff that people talk about, about how they got better and how they lost their thyroid condition and all that stuff. That's not what the training is about. The training's about not moving someplace. It's not about growth. The training's about transformation in which the process of life is reversed, and if, in fact, that does happen, then community is the natural process which results from transformation.

So the training is not an end of anything. It's the beginning of something and what it begins is that process of community. But then, instead of trying to get enlightened, you live as an expression of the enlightenment.